

ABC WORLD NEWS TONIGHT
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PERSIAN GULF
WAR 2

MCWETHY: This is John McWethy in Washington. U.S. Government sources say the tanker was outside of Saudi territorial waters when it was attacked by two American-made F-4 Phantoms belonging to Iran. Military sources say an American AWACS early-warning plane, operating out of Saudi Arabia, monitored the whole thing on radar. The Iranian fighters flew across the Persian Gulf, circled the Saudi tanker, apparently wanting to make sure it was the right ship, then attacked. U.S. sources say the Saudi air force scrambled F-15s, but they arrived at the scene too late to do anything. Analysts are not sure if the Saudis got to the scene late because it all happened so fast or because they had no desire to actually tangle with Iran. Officials say the last thing Saudi Arabian wants to do is get drawn into a war with Iran. And to avoid such a thing, some analysts believe the Saudis are probably willing to lose a few tankers. The U.S. government has quietly put the intelligence community on alert. And the five American Navy ships in the Persian Gulf are monitoring as much activity as they can. Administration officials concede, however, that beyond watching, there is little the U.S. can do. John McWethy, ABC News, the Pentagon.